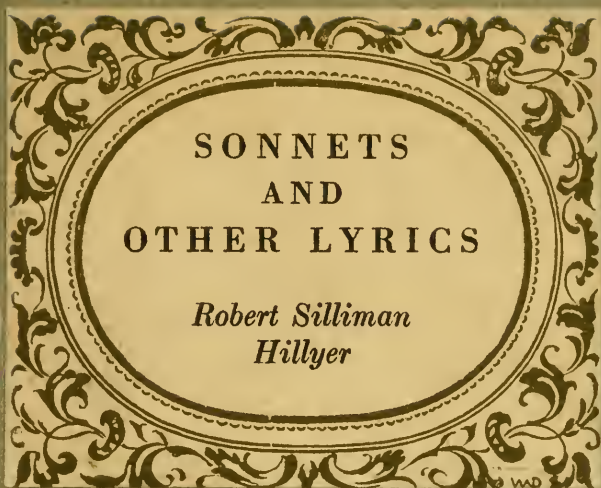


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SONNETS
AND OTHER LYRICS

SONNETS
AND
OTHER LYRICS

Robert Silliman Hillyer



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SONNETS

I

QUICKLY and pleasantly the seasons blow
Over the meadows of eternity,
As wave on wave the pulsings of the sea
Merge and are lost, each in the other's flow.
Time is no lover; it is only he
That is the one unconquerable foe,
He is the sudden tempest none can know,
Winged with swift winds that none may hope to flee.

Fair child of loveliness, these endless fears
Are nought to us; let us be gods of stone,
And set our images beyond the years
On some high mount where we can be alone;
And thou shalt ever be as now thou art,
And I shall watch thee with untroubled heart.

II

THE golden spring redeems the withered year,
And wherefore should my spirit be afraid
Though autumn winds wail through the smoky shade
And chill me like the fleeting ghost of fear ?
Sweet love of youth, I know that thou must fade,
I know what nameless spectres hover near,
And that the loveliness I hold so dear,
Borrowed from dust, to ashes must be paid.

Yet linger still over these wasted meadows
Faint shreds of song, and scattered scents of flowers,
And from the heart's abyss of deepening shadows
Rise the young passions of immortal hours.
The golden spring its withered year redeems;
Sleep comes at last, but sleep made rich with dreams.

III

THEN judge me as thou wilt, I cannot flee,
I cannot turn away from thee forever,
For there are bonds that wisdom cannot sever,
And slaves with souls far freer than the free.
Such strong desires the Universal Giver
With unknown plan has buried deep in me,
That the passionate joy of watching thee
Has dominated all my life's endeavor.

Thou weariest of having me so near,
I feel the scorn thou hast within thy heart,
And yet, thy face has never seemed so dear
As now, when I am minded to depart.
Though thou shalt drive me hence, I love thee so
That I shall watch thee when thou dost not know.

IV

To make my days impatient with unrest,
To filch the quiet of the dark's repose,
Seeking forever what my soul well knows
Is ever far beyond my farthest quest; —
So this is love; swift joys and lingering woes,
A wistful kiss beneath the ashen west,
Farewell and greeting, mouth to mouth once pressed
And then the empty darkness onward flows.

The heights that I have won do not endure,
They shrink beneath the stars I yearn to win,
The triumphs of my passion only lure
My vagrant feet to tread the verge of sin;
Though well I know that when I fall thereover,
Love will fly hence; the loved one and the lover.

V

I CANNOT yet admit unchecked despair
Since now my heart this unknown conflict wages,
I know not what the endless strife presages,
I dare not welcome hope, nor exile care.
For love with fear and hope with grief engages,
And I the burden of the battle bear;
Friends there are none, foes I have everywhere,
Hope lies, grief stabs, and still the combat rages.

And thou, sweet monarch of my love, hast wrought
This ruin on my land of Venily,
And sown rebellion in my humblest thought,
Making my dreams deal traitorously with me;
But stay, I would not that this struggle cease,
For having thee is better far than peace.

VI

How should I think of thee but with delight ?
How should I greet thy face but with a smile ?
And yet dark tears within my heart defile
The dreams of thee that I would have so bright.
If thou shouldst come and end this lonely while,
These leaden hours of the sleepless night,
Still should I fear to show thee what I write,
Lest I repent in vain, and thou revile.

Yet couldst thou read these scriptures of my heart,
Graven in passion with no base control,
For one brief moment, then, they might impart
Some almost worthy offering from my soul.
I write for thee, and cannot let thee read,
Thus love denies itself its utmost need.

VII

How strange it is that thine ethereal grace
Should make me sorry by its loveliness,
For surely beauty is designed to bless
Those hours of youth that have so short a race,
And yet the memory of some old distress
Shadows me over when I see thy face,
And yearning ever for one swift embrace
Has tinged my joy in thee with bitterness.

The young smiles flashing brightly free and fair,
The laughing stars that in thy deep eyes shine,—
It is not love for me that lights them there,
I see their beauty, but they are not mine.
Thy loveliness is joy poisoned with pain;
Rapture to love, torment to love in vain.

VIII

THE rising deluges of circumstance
Have flooded all the gardens of my dreams,
No more the inner sun of gladness gleams
Upon pale flowers of a lover's trance.
Dear Love, I know not why this torrent seems
To drown in turbid billowings of chance
The blossoms of thy visioned countenance,
Soiling my richest thoughts with earthy streams.

The river of the world is ever strong,
I would that I could leave this doubtful shore,
And yet I linger, hoping that ere long
The swirling tide will crush my dreams no more.
And if my gardens ever bloom again,
How fair will be thy perfect blossom then!

IX

I LOVE devoutly; thou shalt seek for long
Ere thou receive another offering
Such as these passionate tributes that I bring
With all the deep submission of the strong.
I would that all my chants of thee could ring
Through the great sorrows of the nameless throng,
And that thy beauty echoing in my song
Could wake the weary city into spring.

Since thou hast changed my life, and in my heart
Hast deep implanted this new love of life,
Perchance these phantoms of thee will impart
Beauty and courage to a world at strife.
And yet I tarry long, in fear to share
With common men a song of one so rare.

X

LET those who love hear me; I speak as one
Who hath known every portion of love's pain,
And all the swift delights that flare and wane
Between the setting and the rising sun.
Sins have I known whose sweetness left no stain,
And virtues that much villainy have done,
But now the pattern that my heart has spun
Is finished, and I see that it is vain.

Vain is the virgin kiss, and vain the thought
That binds the heart's desire from afar,
Each loves the image his own mind has wrought,
Each worships no true spirit, but a star.
By none is this believed until the years
Reveal the sad deception, and with tears.

XI

WE have come back to one another; yes,
After long languishing in spheres apart,
Thou hast returned, since Love's own self thou art,
And I in penitence and fearfulness.
O gentle Love, that leaves me not to smart
Forever in the clutches of distress,
When with a kindly pardon thou canst bless
Consummately my long-disconsolate heart,

Forgive me yet again, if to this joy
I do not rise at once from melancholy,
Mine was the utmost sin thus to destroy
Our calm devotion with unbridled folly;
Bear with me yet awhile until I prove
The tenderness of all-repentant love.

XII

I WILL fling wide the windows of my soul
Under the deep hush of nocturnal skies,
When the white legions of the stars arise
And write their secrets on the Master's scroll.
I will go forth and watch with slumberous eyes
The languid billows of the ocean roll
In silver rhythms on some hidden shoal,
Swelling with laughter, falling back with sighs.

And in the tranquil twilight of that place,
The lovely solitude of lonely sands,
Will flash the pale resplendence of thy grace
In sudden beauty out of other lands,
And I will kneel and kiss thine ivory hands
Beneath the flowered music of thy face.

XIII

POOR faltering lines, my weary soul's relief,
The balm of passion, opiate of pain,
A mightier hand than mine, a mightier brain,
Had wrought in you an immemorial grief.
But though my love and art both prove in vain,
Wither and die with me, I had as lief
That it were so; respite however brief
Is all-sufficient to the living-slain.

For separate voices sink at eventide,
And none survives the creeping hush of time,
Nought lives but life; the fame of them that died
Brings back no vestige of their lovely prime,
Fame and oblivion shall merge again
In nameless loves and laughter, tears and pain.

XIV

LET all men see the ruins of the shrine
That I, with passionate and holy care,
Built long ago from laughter and despair
That godly love might have a fane divine.
Let the wide wings of darkness hover where
The god of youth once drank his rarest wine,
And let the rank breath of some poisoned vine
Choke the last sigh that lingers on the air.

Hurl the white sanctuary down, and bare
Its inmost secrets to the gaze of men,
Unveil the altar to the vulgar stare,
And let none seek to build it up again; —
Ah, when the last wall crumbles, stone by stone,
I shall go hence that I may weep alone.

XV

How oft the traitor trumpet sounds retreat,
Beguiling my bewildered soul again,
When all the forces on the battle-plain
Are ready to do homage at my feet;
And when I fight with strength, it is in vain,
For then I find no foe before my eyes,
They lurk in shadow, waiting to surprise
My soul when it is weary and in pain.

How shall I gauge the conflict and the odds,
Misled and blinded in the midst of strife ?
How shall I know mine enemy ? O gods,
Grant me one moment worthy of my life,
To see at last beyond the dust and shade,
And face real foemen, strong and unafraid.

XVI

EVEN as love grows more, I write the less,
Impelled to speak, unable still to voice
The lyric thoughts like angels that rejoice
Attendant on thy godly loveliness.
Stay the bright swallow high in airy poise,
Carve out of stone an infinite caress,
Garner the fruits of tears and happiness,
Make bloom forever what an hour destroys,

Then shamed by such unprecedented skill
I may find words to name thee, and to sing
Such praises of thy beauty as shall fill
The listening world with floods of carolling;
Till then thou art like starlight on the air,
Or clouds at dawn, unutterably fair.

XVII

VOICE that art life to me, I almost hear
Thy sweet familiar cadence on the breeze,
At times a note lost high among the trees,
At times a far call infinitely clear;
Face that art love to me, my spirit sees
In each unfolding bud of the young year
Imperfect shadows of thy grace appear,
For thou, dear one, art fairer than all these;

Soul that art part of me, at last I know
What murmurs on the wakening breezes blow,
What hand of ivory pours out the wine
Filling the cup of spring to overflow;
All beauty mirrors what is only thine,
And thou the source not mortal, but divine.

XVIII

LOVELY art thou, and everything of thine
Reflects the glory of thy noble grace;
That thou shouldst have returned my swift embrace
Has made me feel that I too am divine.
My spirit met thy spirit face to face,
Thy godlike heart has not rejected mine,
And I have been uplifted in the shrine,
And high exalted in the holy place.

Think not that thou or I shall ever fade
Forgotten in the silence of the years;
We are but one, this world of myth and shade
Shall not appall us with its dusty fears;
If Death should find the hearts whom Love hath kissed,
We never met, and nothing doth exist.

XIX

ALTHOUGH the spring is hastening to pursue
The swift white deer of winter through the glades,
Sometimes they pause for breath beneath the shades;
Then blows the frozen hurricane anew.
And so the chill of thy neglect invades
My heart, in which of late a timid few
Flowers began to spring, until there blew
This sudden storm, blighting the tender blades.

But when April at last shall put to flight
The pallid cohorts of the lingering snow,
And every leaf lifts upward to the light,
And every spirit blossoms from its woe,
Ah, then relent, and let me have my share
Of joy, and rise up radiant from care.

XX

To walk beside the river in the dawn
Is fair indeed when spring is in the breeze,
Bird-carollings, the mumbling hum of bees
Sing matins from the dew-bespangled lawn;
And dancing there behind those druid trees,
Lurks in delight a little singing faun,
Who laughs at us, and yet is always gone
When we would trace his scattered melodies.

Alone, dear love, with thee and the new day,
Now am I radiant like the golden fields,
No distant longing and no dim dismay,
Nought but the gladness that the hour yields.
To walk beside the river is most fair
When Love is young and spring is in the air!

XXI

Two lovers stood alone beneath the night,
And, quickened with a sudden strength, one said,
“ To-night is ours to snatch from out the dead
An immortality of vast delight.
When Youth has felt the touch of time and fled,
When Love in chill despair has taken flight,
There is one joy that knows not change nor blight,—
Ah, kiss me, ere the fleeting hour be sped! ”

The hovering moon leaned low in rapt desire,
Two souls uprose beyond oblivion,
A shout triumphal shook the starry choir,
Then sacred silence fell, until the sun
Gazed like a victor, as he gazes now,
On the new day and the undying vow.

XXII

FLY, joyous wind, through all the wakened earth,
Now when the portals of the dawn outpour
Laughter and radiant sunlight from the store
Of spring's glad passion and loud-ringing mirth.
Cry to the world that I despair no more;
Heart greets my heart, and hope has proved its worth;
Fly where the meadows swell in flowery birth,
Chant everywhere, and everywhere adore.

Circle the basking hills in fragrant flight,
Shout "Rapture! Rapture!" if sweet sorrow passes,
And whisper low in intimate delight
My love-song to the undulating grasses.
Grief is no more, Love rises with the spring,
O fly, free wind, and "Rapture! Rapture!" sing.

XXIII

OVER the waters but a single bough
Stretches in silhouette against the moon,
The little dark waves haunt the dim lagoon
And splash against the languid-moving prow.
I should have left thee when the afternoon
Surrendered to pursuing night, for now
Too perilously dear and fair art thou,
And love too soon invoked shall die too soon.

I fear the very floods of happiness
That swell the narrow chambers of my heart,
Knowing indeed that with our first caress,
Contentment and my soul forever part;
O night of love and beauty, all the years
Shall pay for thy brief ecstasy with tears.

XXIV

THERE was a boy in some forgotten spring
Who fled from all his comrades at the school,
And in the hills beside a forest pool
Lay on the grass, watching, and listening.
And as he listened, melancholy delight
Stirred in his heart a pang he did not know,
And voices of new passion bade him write
Of the vague thoughts that shook his spirit so.

Now on the battlefield of later times,
I meet those dreams returning in the forms
Of mighty friends and foes amid the strife;
And reading those imperfect boyish rhymes,
I hear through the blown dust of many storms
The hymns of the advance-guard of my life.

XXV

Now would that thou wert here, my happiness,
Here in the flesh, or else completely gone
Out of my life, out of my thoughts withdrawn,
And memory clean of love and old distress.
Night dreams in pain of thee, and on that lawn
Where we would sit at eventide, and press
Heart against heart, only white loneliness
Stretches beneath the winter's cheerless dawn.

Thou woundest me with absence, all the air
Seems echoing thy name, and through the day
I woo forgetfulness, but unaware
My thoughts return to our farewell caress.
Now would that thou wert here, my happiness,
Joy dwells with thee, and thou art far away.

XXVI

WHAT though the night be dissonant with rain,
And roofs drip in a mournful monotone
On the deserted streets, and breezes moan
Over the naked boughs like ghosts in pain;
Yet are there voices through the darkness blown
From some remote celestial domain
That hint of peace, and scatter all the vain
Questions that mock the soul brooding alone.

All nights are beautiful, but in the warm
Wet darkness that knows neither stars nor moon,
Whose bells half-heard through the complaining storm
Bind the wind's discords in harmonious tune,
The soul withdraws into its cave of rest,
And dreams long dreams, well-loved, but not expressed.

XXVII

ABOUT the headlands and the rocky shoals
I hear the breath of twilight, sighing, sighing,
And over the wail and dash of breakers, crying,
The voices of old ships and wandering souls.
Through the wet air squadrons of gulls are flying,
Wheeling but once against the skies, then tossed
Into the wind like a flight of visions lost
With vanished souls into the darkness dying.

O harp of the winds singing above the dead,
O rush of wings over the turbulent deep,
Pray for the spirits unaccompanied,
The dreams returned into oblivion,
The men drifting far from the stars and sun,
Lost in a lonely night and a loveless sleep.

XXVIII

THE insurgent sea sweeps through the barrier
Triumphant, all its foaming strength amassed
In one tempestuous tide, wallowing past
The broken banks and the worn dykes that were
Upbuilt by coward hearts; sated at last
It settles in calm pools about the bar,
So that at twilight the young evening star
Beholds its image in still waters cast.

Against unyielding shores I too have striven,
And won at last like the uprising sea,
And sink to rest beneath a quiet heaven,
After long struggles, a long victory;
But my star vanishes, its light withdrawn,
And darkness falls unpromising of dawn.

XXIX

SPEAK not of waning love and changing days,
Youth may be short and life may not endure,
Yet with a strength unslacked, a vision sure,
My love companions thee in all thy ways.
Whither thou wanderest in times unsure
Of peace, however far thy spirit strays
From love of me, my spirit ever stays
Close to thy side, and there shall rest secure.

If thou shouldst weary of me, and alone
I walked with grief, yet should I be aware
How far unworthy I had been to share
In thy diviner life, or sing thy praise;
If thou shouldst hate me, yet I am thine own, —
Speak not of waning love and changing days.

XXX

WHO follows Love shall walk in outland places,
Beyond the common cheer of hall and town,
He shall forget all things, the friendly faces,
The strife for wealth, the struggle for renown.
A young crusader putting by his crown,
A pilgrim following a holy vision,
Heeding nor threat of king nor gibe of clown,
The tyrant's hatred nor the world's derision, —

Thus shall he wander; in no bright Elysian
Meadows shall be his quest, but through the vast
And midnight fears that shake his heart's decision
With staring madness, till he see at last
Like Parsifal in ages long ago,
Love's flaming chalice out of darkness glow.

XXXI

ONLY last night we dwelt together, we
Whose lips the ultimate farewells enthrall;
Last night itself is but a stone let fall
Into the chasm of eternity.
There shall be echoes, I shall hear them call
However faint, however far they be;
There shall be shadows, I shall always see
Them beckon from Time's memory-haunted hall.

The dear mirages of the years gone by
Glow falsely golden from their dark domain,
But now they stir me not. " Mere mockery,"
Low to my heart I say to still its pain,
And cloud-built cities in the sunset sky
Fade out in dark across the endless plain.

XXXII

THOU only wert my hope, and thou art gone.
Thou, the one star in monotones of sky,
Art vanished like a meteor, and I,
Lost in the night, have ceased to pray for dawn.
I watched thee fade, I saw thee passing by
And tried to call thee, but my lips were dumb;
It had been better hadst thou never come, —
Remembered riches mock my poverty.

Blow from afar the little sounds of bells,
Wood-smoke hangs thinly on the autumn air,
The town's unconscious hush is like a prayer,
And night sleeps pleasantly among the dells;
I only wander on, and know not where,
Through the great dark, pursued by faint farewells.

XXXIII

IF in some fair Elysian seclusion
We yet shall find the dreams that we have wrought
To guide our souls while the dark strife is fought
Amongst these shades moving in black confusion,
If with our finite sorrows we have bought
Infinite joy, safe from the world's intrusion,
And in this wilderness of blind delusion
Have sought one vision worthy to be sought,

Then we are not irrevocably parted,
But fighting upward, each in his own fashion,
From mortal dust to an immortal passion,
Separate in earthly chance, yet single-hearted,
We that in steep and lonely paths have trod,
At dawn shall meet before the face of God.

XXXIV

LONG after both of us are scattered dust,
And alien souls, perchance, shall read of thee,
Guessing the passions that have crushed from me
These poor confessions of my love and trust;
Ah, well I know how heartless they will be,
For some will laugh, and others, more unjust,
Whose minds know not of love, but only lust,
Will stain the vesture of our memory.

And yet a few there may be who will feel
My true devotion and my deep desires,
And know that these unhappy lines reveal
Only new images in changeless fires;
And they, indeed, will linger with a sigh
To think that beauty such as thine must die.

OTHER LYRICS

TO A SCARLATTI PASSEPIED

STRANGE little tune, so thin and rare,
Like scents of roses of long ago,
Quavering lightly upon the strings
Of a violin, and dying there
With a dancing flutter of delicate wings;
Thy courtly joy and thy gentle woe,
Thy gracious gladness and plaintive fears
Are lost in the clamorous age we know,
And pale like a moon in the lurid day;
A phantom of music, strangely fled
From the princely halls of the quiet dead,
Down the long lanes of the vanished years,
Echoing frailly and far away.

DOOMSDAY

THE garlands and the songs of May
Shall welcome in the Judgment Day;
About the basking countryside
Blossom the souls of them that died.
O Dead, awake! Arise in bloom!
Upon the joyous day of doom.

They rise up from the bleeding earth
In gracious legions of rebirth,
Each as a flower or a tree
Of verdant immortality,
And hosts of lyric angels sing
In the rippling groves of spring.

From the tomb of youth there grows
A passionately petaled rose,
Where the virgin whitely lies,
A lily fair as Paradise,
And in that old oak's leafy glee
Some gouty sire makes sport of me.

O Dead of yore and yesterday,
All hail the resurrecting May!
Beside you in the flowering grass
The feet of youth and love shall pass,
And we that greet you with a smile
Shall join you in a little while.

SONG

IN Venily the highways rang
With voices of the April day,
And all about the budding way
The lyric soul of morning sang.

The dripping trees were soft and new
When dawn lay smiling on the hills,
Gemming her breast with daffodils,
And bathing in the rainbow dew.

We trod the streets of Venily,
We knew its paths, my love and I,
And when the light fell from the sky,
And when the dark devoured the sea,

We wrung each hour of its joy,
We lived each brave unspoken thought,
But the day came, and we were nought,
Nought but a frightened girl and boy.

The flower of remembrance springs
Where Venily my city stood,
But still in the enchanted wood
The lyric soul of morning sings.

K A T A M A

THERE is no sunlight on the dunes this hour,
For the last sword has swept the twilight skies,
Flashed far aloft, and vanished. A gull flies
Like a black bee into the sunset flower.

Faint inarticulate echoes with the breeze
Drift in upon the silence from afar,
Like divine voices speaking wondrous rhymes;
And slowly from the vague and misty seas
In lonely vigil rises the first star,
Dreaming of distant lands and buried times.

TWILIGHT

Now the thrush no longer calls
Through the woods' reverberant halls,
Now the sunlight's flickering sheen
Through the windy webs of green
Pales away, and deepening shades
Harbinger advancing night,
And the creeping dusk invades
The waning kingdom of the light.
Darkness with its coronet
Of stars has not come hither yet,
Neither day nor night on high
Rules the regions of the sky,
Time has fled, and fled also
Mortal fear and mortal woe.

Spirits sleeping far apart
Wondering rise white from tears,
Hand clasps hand, heart kisses heart
Across the distance of the years.

Vision hour, twilight hour,
Dead love and the withered flower

Claim thee as their own and bloom
Dream-like from a crumbled tomb; —
Now the thrush no longer calls
Through the woods' reverberant halls,
Now the dusk is come, and day
And night and time are fled away.

OUT OF LUCRETIUS

BE calm, O soul so often tried,
Sleep once was thine, and sleep shall come again,
Ere thou wert born, when thou hast died,
Not thine the pain.

Before thou wokest from the womb
Sorrow and hate were old, and fear and need,
Thou didst not know them; in the tomb
Thou shalt not heed.

Serenely face thine undertaking.
Sorrow is great ? thy slumber shall be deep,
And life nought but a moment's waking
From sleep to sleep.

BY WINTER SEAS

BENEATH the thin edge of the watery world
The sun drops down, its wavering light is cast
On the white breakers foaming line on line;
The flapping wind is furled
And vanquished day retreats at last.
The frozen dunes and the wet sands resign
Their tints of purple and of gold,
As gathering in the shadows they enfold
The silence in a seamless pall.
So move the years to their predestined night,
So fade the colours from the festival
Of youth's imagining and love's delight,
And gradually from the failing sight
The dark removes the visionary lands
Which tempt the gaze to rest on hopes afar,
Leaving beneath a solitary star
Only the narrow prospect of bleak sands.

A scream strikes through the air,
And falling at my feet from out the frigid night
A dead gull flutters, stricken in its flight,

Its wings outstretched stiff with unbending ice.
Cold, cold and white it glimmers there,
A still-unconsecrated sacrifice.

To what cruel deity, pale wayfarer,
Hast thou been offered, stricken in the pride
Of soaring over the immeasurable tide
That sweeps in slow and wide
Above the ruins of a thousand lands ?
The wings that beat triumphant shall not stir
Again, nor shall a single note
Swell the strong sinews of that splendid throat,
And soon beneath the fickle sands
Shall vanish the last sign of thy long strife.
Oh, what cruel god has plucked with impious hands
The pinions of adventure from thy life ?

So falls the stricken spirit down the skies,
Its power blighted in the frozen breath
Of time, and on some undiscovered shore
Gives up the trophies of its brave emprise,
While through the broken rocks and crannies pour
The intrushing tides of overwhelming death.

SONG

Now time has gathered to itself
The lily and the rose,
To mould upon a dusty shelf
Where no man knows.

Now all things lovely fail and wane,
The tender petals close,
And in the dawn shall bloom again
No lily, no rose.

Now from the garden of thy face
The lily and the rose
Are gathered to a dusty place
Where no man knows.

SONG

WHEN I said farewell to thee,
Oh, I was a skilful player!
Never actor laughed like me,
Never any mime was gayer;
But my heart in misery
Sought some god in prayer.

Now the night comes, when all men
Put their lines and masques away,
Tears will claim the lover then
As a prologue to the play;
Tears for darkness, till again
Laughter for the day.

TO THOSE WHO DEFENDED

(THE LLOYD MCKIM GARRISON PRIZE POEM
HARVARD UNIVERSITY, 1916)

I

How vain it seems, how vain the valiant strength
Of nations risen in splendour to the sun,
For down the weary stretch of battle-length
Surges a conflict that is never done,
And of all victories and losses, none
Survives the memory of a day, and time
Takes back the withering garlands one by one
Of vaunted triumph and of cause sublime.

O Dead who sacrificed your years of prime,
You sacrificed them vainly, and but died
Like actors in some oft-repeated mime,
Some outworn play of Lust and Greed and Pride,
Some allegory writ by bloody hands
Far in the unknown past, in devastated lands.

O nameless Dead of yore and yesterday
Who sleep untroubled in deep quietude,
Long from the sharp alarums of the fray,
You rest so silently in the subdued
Unchanging dusk of dreamless solitude,
How should you know that still the same gaunt war
Plows the old field of battle where you stood,
And flings the seed of suffering afar!

Now quiet twilight woos the evening star,
Now falls the respite of a silent hour;
Inviolat and calm the slumbers are
Of saints in holiness, of kings in power,
And calm the legions are that lie in peace,
The dead who sleep the white sleep of the last release.

III

No traitor trumpet summons for retreat
Down dusty lines of shuddering despair,
No trampled victory or red defeat
Screams a loud torment through the smoky air,
O Dead, or breaks your sleep; and yet somewhere
Your weary comrades struggle overhead
As you once struggled, and all unaware
They fight the same fierce battles in your stead.

Awake once more! Rise from your ashen bed!
You died to end these wars, now rise to life
Again on the wide plains where once you bled
And lost or won; there consummate the strife,
Cry from the bleeding earth, from the shadowy past,
“ This is the last of wars! Forevermore the last! ”

A HERON

A HERON in the marshes stands,
The sentinel of lost outlands;
Unearthly white and immobile
He keeps there in the dying light
A silent watch among the sedge,
Challenging the creeping night,
And the slow mists that reel
Along the water's edge.
Then as the twilight fades at last,
Suddenly like a thwarted ghost
He rises screaming in the vast, —
Grey wings against the greying vast, —
And soon is lost.
But in the sedge and salty fen
His malediction rings again
Like the sinister farewell
Of a soul from some far hell.
Then the hazes disappear,
And the starlight, steady-clear,
Whitens the trembling air and breaks the spell.

A GULL

GREY wings, O grey wings against a cloud
Over the rough waves flashing,
Whose was the scream, startling and loud,
Keen through the skies, — was it thine,
Piercing above the wind and the moaning whine
Of the wide seas dashing ?
Whose was the scream that I heard
In the midst of the hurrying air, —
Was it thine, lost bird ?
Or the voice of an old despair
Shrieking from years long dead,
Inexorable spirit flying
On tempest wings, that passed and fled
Through the storm crying ?

ANTINOUS

I

DIM gardens sleep in darkness, quiet trees
Weave their uncertain boughs against the sky;
Out of the prison of a cloud there flees
The fugitive moon, slender and whitely shy.
There is music faltering upon the breeze
Despairing like the phantom of a sigh;
The night dreams deep in loveliness, yet I
Have deeper dreams and lovelier memories.

For I have seen leaping from out the grey
And sombre groves the young Antinous,
Dancing and chanting, vanishing away,
Leaving the passionate gardens tremulous.
O Love! O Laughter! fleet and sinuous,
Full swiftly follows the despondent day.

II

How wan and weary-eyed the cloudy dawn
 Creeps through the mist with sick and halting tread;
 The splendour of these wasted bowers is gone,
 The old illusion of the dark is dead.
 Some godly auspices have been withdrawn,
 On high some awful sentence has been said;
 See how the garlands rot upon the head
 Of yon dispirited and stony faun.

And Adrian's ship with wild teeth in the foam,
 With blazoned pinions to the foggy breeze,
 Bears on its decks the mightiest lords of Rome,
 Imperial hosts upon disconsolate seas, —
 The gods shall spare the majesty of these,
 But one white laughing boy returns not home. . . .

III

COME, let us hasten hence and weep no more,
The sinking sea resumes its tranquil ways,
Night looms expectant at the eastern door
And trails the last cloud into lifeless haze.
Antinous is dead; we kneel before
The portals of our past in vain, nor raise
The laughing phantoms of our yesterdays
Upon this desolate and empty shore.

Now deepening pools of shadow overflow
Into the sea of dark. A far-off bell
Sobs with a sweet vibration, long and slow,
A last farewell, forevermore farewell.
And will he wake and hear ? We cannot tell,
And will he answer ? Ah, we do not know.

W I N T E R N I G H T

THE snow lies crisp beneath the stars,
On roofs and on the ground,
Late footsteps crunch along the paths,
There is no other sound.

So cold it is the very trees
Snap in the rigid frost,
A dreadful night to think on them, —
The homeless and the lost.

The dead sleep sheltered in the tomb;
The rich drink in the hall;
The Virgin and the Holy Child
Crouch shivering in a stall.

THE RECOMPENSE

WHEN the last song is sung, and the last spark
Of light dies out forever, and the dark,
The voiceless dark eternal, shrouds the earth,
When the last cries of pain and shouts of mirth
Sink in the desolate silences of space,
Where then shall flower the beauty of your face ?
O Love the laughing, Youth the rose-in-hand,
In what unknown and undiscovered land
Shall flower then the beauty of your face ?

I know not, but I know that all returns
At last unchanged, and to the heart that yearns
Shall be repaid all loneliness and loss;
Sometime with shadowy sails shall fly across
The shoreless ocean of infinity
A ship from out the past, and the great sea
Of life shall bear you from the new worlds over
The waves, and back again to the old lover.

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